



# DATING VIOLENCE CAN BE A LIFE OR DEATH MATTER TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

## Educators can make a difference

**One in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.**

*(“Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality,” Journal of American Medicine, Vol. 286, No. 5, August 1, 2001).*

**Michigan law changed on April 1, 2002. Since then, dating violence victims of any age have the same protections under criminal law as victims of domestic violence.**

The State of Michigan recognizes the dangers of dating violence and it now provides better legal protections for victims. But the power of the law will be multiplied as young people learn how to recognize the warning signs and where to go for help. That’s why the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board, (MDVPTB) created this Dating Violence Youth Education Package for adults who work with high school-age students. You can use these materials to make a significant difference—perhaps even a difference of life or death.



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### INCLUDED IN THIS PACKAGE ARE TOOLS TO:

- **BUILD** students’ awareness of dating violence
- **GIVE** students the ability to recognize warning signs in their own or friends’ relationships
- **OFFER** emergency and ongoing help that could prevent a tragedy
- **PROMOTE** non-controlling, non-violent behavior among teens.

The Dating Violence Youth Education Package contains everything you need to conduct engaging learning sessions with students, including background information for you, lesson plans for your classes and handouts for students. The materials are designed for high school health classes, but are appropriate with any group of high school students.

**You don’t have to do this alone.** We encourage you, if at all possible, to contact a domestic violence program in your community.

- They may have a fully developed and implemented Dating Violence Prevention Program and could assist you in your efforts to increase students’ awareness about this important topic.
- If students in your class disclose abuse, staff at your local domestic violence program are trained on how to respond to them.

## **TO LOCATE THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IN YOUR AREA**

- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE, or
- View the MDVPTB's Resource Directory on the MDVPTB's Web site at [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia). Select "Individual and Family Services" from the left sidebar. Then click on "Domestic Violence" from the list on the right sidebar.

You can present the material in this package as a series using all of the accompanying handouts or you may choose to conduct a single session on the topic. We have included suggestions for either time frame. Either way, please hand out the Dating Violence Resources sheet as part of your presentation, and add to it any information you receive from your local domestic violence agency. One of the most important messages in this package is to get help when you need it.

## **INCLUDED IN THIS PACKAGE ARE:**

### **Background Information**

1. Background information about this educational initiative

### **Lesson Plans**

2. Overview of Dating Violence
3. Things to Remember When Working with an Abusive Teen
4. Suggestions for presenting the material in a series of three classes
5. Suggestions for presenting material in a 30 or 50-minute class, either using printed materials from this package or using these materials along with videos available from other sources
6. Discussion Questions – with educator notes

### **Educator Sheets**

7. Group Exercise
8. Instructor's Guide for: Dating Violence Student Survey – Open-Ended Questions
9. Instructor's Guide for: Dating Violence Student Survey – True-False Questions

### **Students Surveys and Handouts**

10. Dating Violence Student Survey – Open-ended Questions
11. Dating Violence Student Survey – True False Questions
12. Dating Violence Fact Sheet
13. Power and Control Wheel
14. Non-Violence Wheel
15. Identifying Abusive Behaviors in Dating Relationships
16. Battering/Abusive Relationships vs. Relationships Based on Equality
17. Helping a Friend Who is Surviving a Violent Relationship
18. Teens Talking to Teens Who Are Abusive
19. Criminal Justice System Process Flowchart: An Overview for Teachers and Students
20. Dating Violence Resources

**English and Spanish versions of a poster with the national hotline number for domestic violence: 800-799-SAFE.**

If you have further questions about how to use the materials in this package, please contact your local domestic violence program.

If you or someone you know is being hurt in a dating relationship, please call (800) 799-SAFE or TDD (800) 787-3224 to be referred to the domestic violence program in your area.



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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION



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# BACKGROUND ON DATING VIOLENCE YOUTH EDUCATION PACKAGE ]

## WHY YOU RECEIVED THE DATING VIOLENCE YOUTH EDUCATION PACKAGE.

In the fall of 2000, the Governor of Michigan convened the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Task Force (DVHPTF), chaired by the Lt. Governor, Dick Posthumus. The task force included many organizations concerned about the issue of domestic violence. In April 2001, the task force delivered 58 recommendations to the Governor based on its research and five public hearings held throughout the state.

In December 2001, a twenty-four-bill domestic violence legislative package was signed into law. **One bill in particular could directly affect high school students in dating relationships. Specifically, this Act amends the law to include current or former dating relationships as the basis for a warrantless arrest for assault or aggravated assault in a domestic relationship.** "Dating relationship" means "frequent, intimate associations primarily characterized by the expectation of affectional involvement. This term does not include a casual relationship or an ordinary fraternization between two individuals in a business or social context."

The Act became effective April 1, 2002 and means that dating violence survivors of any age in Michigan are now afforded the same protections under criminal law as domestic violence survivors who are married, formerly married, reside or formerly resided or have a child in common with the assailant.

The Legislature and Governor have designated the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board (MDVPTB) to provide educators with information to teach young people their rights and responsibilities under the law and give them skills to reduce controlling and violent behaviors. This Dating Violence Youth Education Package is the result. It offers teachers and other school personnel the tools to incorporate dating violence information into their existing curriculum.

## WHY USE THIS PACKAGE IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

### **The issue impacts a significant number of high school students.**

Young women between the ages of 16-24 are the most vulnerable to intimate partner violence.<sup>1</sup> Another study suggests as many as 20% of the girls in your high school have been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.<sup>2</sup> You can also expect that a significant percentage of boys are using violence, emotional abuse and control against a dating partner.

### **Informed teenagers can be a crucial resource to victims.**

Studies generally have found that when teenagers are being hurt in dating relationships, they rarely seek the help of a teacher, police officer, or counselor. Often, their abuser is using controlling behaviors to make the victims feel as though they are to blame. They may think that reporting a problem would get them into more trouble. Most often, if they choose to tell anyone, that person will be their friend and peer. Clearly, it is crucial that students know how to be helpful and supportive to friends who are victims of dating violence.

<sup>1</sup> "Intimate Partner Violence," Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, May 2000, NCJ 178274.

<sup>2</sup> "Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy and Suicidality," *Journal of American Medicine*, Vol. 286, No. 5, August 1, 2001.

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## Patterns of abuse in adulthood can start at a young age.

It is clear that by the time most domestic abusers reach adulthood, their patterns of abuse in intimate relationships are already firmly established. To affect change, we must reach youth. Today's teens learn about the nature of intimate relationships from many sources: parents, peers, movies and music, just to name a few. There is no guarantee that these sources present our youth with images of intimate relationships demonstrating parity between dating partners. This Dating Violence Youth Education Package for educators and students offers information, exercises, discussion starters, resources and tips for teaching youth about this very important issue.

MDVPTB is committed to helping you educate your students about dating violence as it pertains to Michigan law as well as its nature and dynamics. Knowledge is power!

## WHAT COMMUNITY RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM?

We encourage you to partner with one of the many local domestic violence programs throughout the state. Many have a fully developed and implemented Dating Violence Prevention Program and could assist you in your efforts to increase students' awareness about this very important topic. Additionally, if students in your class disclose abuse, domestic violence program staff are fully trained in how to respond to them. To locate the domestic violence program in your area, either call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800)799-SAFE or view MDVPTB's Resource Directory, which can be found on MDVPTB's Web site, [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia). Select Individual and Family Services from the left sidebar. Then click on Domestic Violence from the list on the right sidebar.

You never know who in your class might be a victim of dating violence or know someone who is being victimized, therefore, it is essential that you hand out resource information during every presentation. If you have any further questions about how to utilize the materials included in the package, please contact your local domestic violence program.

## WHAT IF I WANT ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THIS PACKAGE?

For further information or to download another copy of this resource package, please visit MDVPTB's Web site, [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia). Select Individual and Family Services from the left sidebar. Then click on Domestic Violence from the list on the right sidebar.

## WHO IS THE MICHIGAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT BOARD?

The Board is appointed by the Governor and is mandated to lead statewide efforts to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault. The Board delivers no direct services to victims, but it administers grants to local agencies, conducts research in collaboration with other organizations, develops and recommends policy and legislation, helps set standards in the field of domestic violence, and educates professionals and the public.

**NOTE:** *Both females and males can be victims of dating violence, but numerous studies reveal the reality that the majority of victims are female (usually over 95%). In this package we often, but not always, refer to victims as female and abusers as male. That reference does not change the fact that every survivor—male and female—deserves support, options, resources, and safety, and that denying the reality only delays finding the solution.*





Thousands of teens experience the emotional and physical trauma of dating violence every day in this country. Although many of us have become aware of the impact that domestic violence has on its adult victims, we have not fully acknowledged the impact dating violence has on teens. The following is a brief overview of the issue and the reaction teens have to the violence in their relationships.

Dating violence is a pattern of assaultive and controlling behaviors that one person uses against another in order to gain or maintain power in the relationship. The abuser intentionally behaves in ways that cause fear, degradation, and humiliation to control the other person. Forms of abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional and psychological.

Victims and abusers come from all social and economic backgrounds, faith communities, and racial and ethnic groups. Abuse also occurs in same-sex relationships.

Abusers will attempt to control their partners in a variety of ways. The following is a list of some common controlling behaviors.

### USE OF ISOLATION

Trying to cut off the victim's relationship with family and friends; using jealousy to justify behavior

### EMOTIONAL

Humiliating the victim in front of friends or making the victim feel guilty when she/he confronts the abuser about the abuse

### INTIMIDATION

Making the victim fearful by using threatening behavior, abuse of animals; verbal aggression or destruction of property

### COERCION

Threatening to find someone else if the dating partner doesn't comply with the abuser's wishes or demands; threats to harm self or others if the dating partner leaves

### MINIMIZING, DENYING, OR BLAMING

Telling the victim she is at fault for the abuse; claiming the victim is lying about the abuse; making light of the controlling behaviors

### PHYSICAL

Using or threatening to use physically assaultive behaviors such as hitting, shoving, grabbing, slapping, beating, kicking, etc.

### SEXUAL

Touching or forcing the victim to engage in any unwanted sexual activity

For a more inclusive list of behaviors used by an abuser, view the MDVPTB's "Domestic Violence Survivor's Legal Handbook" on our web site: [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia). Select "Individual and Family Services" from the left sidebar. Then click on Domestic Violence under the Quick Links on the right sidebar. The Legal Handbook is the box labeled Survivor Resources on MDVPTB's homepage.

At the beginning stages of the dating relationship these behaviors may not be apparent or the use of them is so subtle that they may be mistaken for the abuser's caring and concern. For example, the abuser may suggest that they spend all their time together because when they are apart she/he will miss the other. If the victim spends time with other friends, the abuser might accuse her/him of not being serious about the relationship or the abuser may appear to be sad and disappointed that the survivor would want to spend time with others. As the relationship becomes more involved, the abuser may gradually escalate the use of these behaviors.

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If you or someone you know is being hurt in a dating relationship, please call (800) 799-SAFE or TDD (800) 787-3224 to be referred to the domestic violence program in your area.



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## OVERVIEW OF DATING VIOLENCE ]

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**Abusers** in teen dating relationships, like those in adult relationships, use behaviors of power and control because they **CHOOSE** to. They believe that they are entitled to use these methods to keep their dating partner under control and often their peer group approves of and supports these behaviors. Abusers tend to make excuses for their use of violence or will usually put the responsibility for their abuse on someone else. For example, “you made me do it” is a statement abusers often use.

**Victims** react in a variety of ways to the actions of the abuser which include, but are not limited to, the following: they may be confused by the change in the abuser’s behavior; they may try to understand why their dating partner is acting in this way; they may make excuses for their dating partner; they may blame themselves for the abuse; or they may feel the need to defend the abuser/relationship. Other reactions may include:

- attempting to fix the problem
- feeling isolated
- feeling guilt or shame
- being afraid of the abuser
- becoming depressed
- lacking concentration
- becoming angry
- eroding self-confidence

It is important to understand that the victim is **NOT** to blame for the controlling and assaultive behaviors of the abuser nor can the victim prevent or stop the abuse. When you blame the victim you also unintentionally:

- Collude or take sides with the abuser
- Send the message that the victim is responsible
- Further isolate the victim from help
- Decrease your ability to give support

Because the abuser, and perhaps others, have said that the victim is responsible for the violence, she/he may believe that she/he can prevent the abuse. **Only** the abuser can choose to stop the violence.

**It is when the victim expresses plans to end the relationship that the abuser might increase abusive behaviors in frequency and severity. Tragically, the violence may escalate to the point of homicide, suicide or both. It is important to note that for many victims of dating violence, leaving the relationship may be the most dangerous time. Some of the following may be indications of danger for the victim:**

- The victim attempts to leave or has ended the relationship
- The abuser has access to weapons
- The abuser abuses alcohol or other drugs
- The abuser is depressed
- The abuser has threatened to kill the victim, self, or others
- The abuser acts enraged about the victim’s choices

Because of the potential for homicide, it is important for each of us to educate ourselves about dating violence, so that we may be aware of the profound impact on teens, learn how we can be supportive of victims and become comfortable with helping those who are abusive.



# THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN WORKING WITH AN ABUSIVE TEEN ]

## A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS/ADMINISTRATORS

### WHY SAY ANYTHING AT ALL?

The abuser is counting on you NOT to say anything at all. By ignoring his behavior, you become part of the reason he is allowed to continue abusing his dating partner. You also send a strong message to the survivor that there are few people, if any, willing to help her. She becomes more isolated and less likely to be able to escape the abuse.

### THINK OF THE SURVIVOR'S SAFETY AT ALL TIMES.

Most survivors do want someone to talk to the abuser. Aggressive or hostile interventions, however, often backfire on the survivor and can worsen her situation. Be aware that your interventions with the abuser may appear to the survivor as though you are supporting the abuser. The abuser may also reinforce this notion with the survivor. Be honest with the survivor about your work with the abuser. It may help to ask a colleague to do the intervention with the abuser.

### DO NOT CONDONE THE ABUSER'S USE OF VIOLENCE.

- Be real and honest. Let the student know that dating violence is serious, that it is not right that he emotionally, psychologically, physically or sexually abuse his partner, and that you don't want him to get into trouble with school authorities or law enforcement. Encourage him to change his behavior before this happens.
- Reiterate that his behavior is his choice. Emphasize that his dating partner does not need to change in order for him to stop his abusive behavior. The violence ends only when he **chooses** to stop his violent and emotionally abusive behaviors. While you acknowledge that this kind of change is not easy and that he can't do it alone, remind him that he has alternatives.
- **Do not** become indignant, patronizing or blaming. Let him know that even though you will not condone his behavior, that you do support his effort to make the necessary changes.
- **Do not** let the conversation turn to a discussion of her faults. No matter what his dating partner has done, she does not deserve to be beaten, kicked, punched, shoved, intimidated or abused in any way. If the relationship is not working for him, he has the right to end it respectfully, not change or control it by using abuse.
- Research shows that he is unlikely to stop his violent behavior on his own. In fact, his use of violence is likely to increase in frequency and severity. Find qualified resources for the student and offer the option to come see you again.
- Some suggested phrasing:

*"It seems like you are having a rough time, Jack, do you want to talk about it?"* If he agrees, he will probably want to tell you how terrible his partner is or that he is, in fact, the victim. Keep the conversation focused on him.

*"I don't want to talk about Monica right now, I'm more worried about you and your behavior. I assume you don't want to be hurting or scaring her."*

- Abusers CAN change IF they choose to change. The earlier we can reach youth, the better our chances of preventing future dating/domestic violence.

**NOTE:** Both females and males can be victims of dating violence, but numerous studies reveal the reality that the majority of victims are female (usually over 95%). In this package we often, but not always, refer to victims as female and abusers as male. That reference does not change the fact that every survivor—male and female—deserves support, options, resources, and safety. . .denying the reality only delays finding the solution.

*Adapted from: (2001). Praxis International. Sojourner House Rural Project and the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence "Resource Guide for Educators"*

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